The University Core Renewal Committee invites proposals for pilot classes to be taught in the 2016–2017 academic year as part of the second year of an ongoing process to renew and strengthen the Boston College Core Curriculum. These courses will intentionally engage first-year students in foundational and integrative ways, connecting them to faculty expertise, life outside the classroom, and the distinctive qualities of Boston College as a Jesuit, Catholic university. Classes in the Renewed Core will contribute to the rigorous intellectual development and personal formation of our students by broadening their intellectual horizons, introducing them to the best of contemporary pedagogy, research, and teaching, promoting their integration of knowledge, beliefs, and actions, and preparing them for lives of freedom, integrity, intellectual engagement, leadership, and service. A list of the 2015–2016 pilot Core offerings follows this call for proposals. Interviews with participating faculty can be viewed here: http://www.bc.edu/sites/core/pilot-core-courses.html.

Two kinds of courses involving interdisciplinary collaboration will be offered in the pilot phase (more detail follows below):

- **Complex Problems** courses are large team-taught, six-credit classes that address a contemporary problem.

- **Enduring Questions** courses are linked pairs of distinct three-credit classes of approximately 25 students that meet separately, each taught by a faculty member from a different department. Both classes are connected by a common topic and set of questions and share some readings and assignments.

In both cases, each of the two faculty members represents one of eight existing Core subject areas (Arts, History, Literature, Mathematics, Natural Science, Philosophy, Social Sciences, Theology).

Both Complex Problems and Enduring Questions courses will integrate structured reflection and activities outside normal class meeting times. Faculty will work with the offices of Mission and Ministry and of Student Affairs to develop programming that deepens academic study with opportunities for exploration and growth.

Because these labor-intensive classes reflect a dramatic shift in the way many of us teach, faculty who have not previously taught a pilot course will be required to participate in planning and pedagogical workshops in the spring and summer of 2016, for which they will receive a stipend of $10,000. For each faculty member, the first offering of a Complex Problem class will count as
two courses of his or her normal teaching load. Proposals not selected for the 2016–2017 academic year may be considered for 2017–2018.

Faculty are invited to submit proposals for either a Complex Problem or an Enduring Questions course. You may propose a class either as a two-person team or individually (in which case the University Core Renewal Committee will attempt to pair two proposals). To facilitate team formation, two “meet and greet” lunches will be held for interested faculty on September 17 and 23.

Proposals should include the following information:

• For a Complex Problems course: the name(s), department or school affiliation(s), and contact information of the faculty member(s); the title and a one-paragraph course description of the class; a brief explanation of how the course will fulfill the characteristics of Complex Problems; and a brief statement of support from the department chair(s) of the faculty member(s).

• For an Enduring Questions course: the name(s), department or school affiliation(s), and contact information of the faculty member(s); the title and a brief description of the common topic; the title and one-paragraph course description of the distinctive class or classes; a brief explanation of how the course and class(es) will fulfill the characteristics of Enduring Questions; and a brief statement of support from the department chair(s) of the faculty member(s).

Proposals must be emailed to the office of the Associate Dean for the Core (bc-core21@bc.edu) by October 5, 2015.

If you have questions while preparing your course proposal, please contact Associate Dean Julian Bourg (julian.bourg@bc.edu).

Further Description

Background
The Boston College Core Curriculum was last revised in 1991 (Task Force on the Core Curriculum Final Report, June 1991). It is appropriate that in the second decade of the twenty-first century Boston College revisit and revise its basic undergraduate programs. In a first phase of Core Renewal in 2012–2013, faculty and administrators created an innovative plan of action (Toward a Renewed Core, May 2, 2013). In a second phase in 2014, an overall vision of the Core’s relationship to Boston College’s Jesuit, Catholic traditions and mission was articulated
(The Vision Animating the Boston College Core Curriculum, August 2014). Guided by the descriptions of the Complex Problems and Enduring Questions courses developed in Toward a Renewed Core and the August 2014 Vision statement, we have now reached a third phase of Core Renewal: it is time to build on the two previous steps by launching a number of pilot classes that synthesize imaginative approaches to teaching with Jesuit educational principles. These pilot courses will make a key contribution to the shared goals of the Core Curriculum described in the new Vision: opening the mind and heart, encouraging character formation in service of the common good, deepening human sympathy, inspiring creativity, enriching understanding of human diversity, and stimulating clear thought and persuasive expression. As the new Vision states, “The Core Curriculum thus furthers the development of the intellectual, reflective, ethical, and creative habits of mind that will enable students to become lifelong learners, to seek meaning in their lives, and to work toward constructing a more just and human world.”

Course Structures

Complex Problems and Enduring Questions courses are structured differently. The following descriptions give a more complete picture of how the classes will be designed and organized.

Complex Problems

In these six-credit courses, students examine an issue of contemporary urgency and global significance. Classes might understand one global challenge from multiple viewpoints, considering historical context, various interpretations, and attempted solutions. By studying cultural, economic, historical, political, religious, scientific, and/or social currents in relation to their own experience, students foster habits of mind that are alert to global connections, differences, or comparisons. They will be asked to put themselves into the equation: How are they implicated in what they study? How does it affect who they are? What future courses do they want to take? What sort of lives do they want to lead?

Two faculty members share the same classroom for the normal three hours of weekly instructional time. In addition, students attend smaller weekly 90-minute lab sessions led by graduate students in which they learn by doing, working in teams to apply knowledge to real-world issues. Finally, weekly one-hour evening sessions provide additional possibilities for shared learning experiences and reflection. In the pilot phase, these classes will be limited to 75–100 first-year students, although in the future they may be larger. Lab session enrollments will be capped at 19 students.

Enduring Questions

In these linked pairs of three-credit classes, students critically examine and reflect upon fundamental human concerns. Faculty provide them with a foundation in the influential thinkers, writers, and artists who have wrestled with questions that have long concerned reflective people and that transcend particular disciplines, spaces, and times. As students grapple with the
approaches they encounter, they reflect upon their own perspective, strive to articulate their own opinions and beliefs, and continue to define a core set of values. A new generation learns that they are part of a larger, ongoing conversation: the human search for meaning in all its changes and continuities, diversity and abundance.

Two faculty from different departments teach independent classes connected by a common overarching topic. Faculty agree on three enduring questions to examine in their courses, and they collaborate on some shared readings and assignments. The same students take both classes. In addition to the two linked courses, students participate in periodic shared learning experiences and opportunities for reflection throughout the semester. In the pilot phase, these classes will be limited to 25 first-year students, although in the future they may be larger.

**Course Characteristics**
Faculty should consider the Course Characteristics below as they formulate their proposals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Complex Problems Courses</th>
<th>Enduring Questions Courses</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Examine an issue of contemporary urgency and global significance.</td>
<td>Ask students to reflect upon issues and values related to fundamental concerns of human life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consider its historical context, various interpretations, and attempted solutions in a rigorous way.</td>
<td>Introduce students to influential thinkers, writers, or artists who have wrestled with the questions across discipline, time, and space.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Address global connections, differences, or comparisons; consider ethical implications and issues of justice.</td>
<td>Introduce the methods your discipline uses to approach a question, text, or object cultivating analytical and creative thinking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop an attached lab that provides hands-on problem-solving activities for students involving multiple media.</td>
<td>Engage in a dialogue with the methods of the disciplinary approach of the other instructor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduce students to various disciplinary approaches to the problem, and to the ways in which they might intersect, cultivating appropriate analytical and creative skills.</td>
<td>Offer some common readings or assignments across the paired sections.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Work intensively with students to improve their writing (with help from writing fellows if desired).</td>
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Both Enduring Questions and Complex Problems classes will: Incorporate opportunities for reflection on values and experiences that will promote students’ integration of what they learn with the principles that guide their lives: e.g., Why does studying this material contribute to my
better understanding of what it is to be a person? Who am I becoming as I engage this material? How does my study of this material contribute to my better understanding of the world in its wholeness?

As they formulate their proposals, faculty should also consider the Core Curriculum Learning Outcomes articulated in The Vision Animating the Boston College Core Curriculum. A proposed course need not contribute to every Learning Outcome, but it should strive to contribute to a working majority of them:

Students completing the Boston College Core Curriculum will:

1. Demonstrate the critical, mathematical, informational, analytic, expressive, and creative skills that are essential tools of the educated person well-prepared for a meaningful life and vocation.

2. Understand the major ideas and methods of inquiry of the scholarly disciplines that comprise the university and be able to use those methods of inquiry as beginning practitioners to address complex contemporary problems.

3. Be able to identify and articulate the strengths and limitations of the disciplines and the relationship of the disciplines to one another, and demonstrate an understanding of the breadth and diversity of human knowledge as well as its openness to integration in more comprehensive wholes.

4. Be conversant with and able to discuss intelligently enduring questions and issues that are fundamental to human inquiry and that have shaped the traditions from which the university has emerged.

5. Demonstrate the ability to apply more than one disciplinary perspective to the same enduring question or complex contemporary problem.

6. Be familiar with the scholarly exploration of religious faith and understand how faith and reason are related in the search for truth.

7. Demonstrate the ability to examine their values and experiences and integrate what they learn with the principles that guide their lives.

8. Be prepared and disposed to use their talents and education as engaged global citizens and responsible leaders in service of the common good.
2015–2016 Core Renewal Pilot Course Descriptions

Fall 2015

Complex Problems
Course: SOCY1501/EESC1501 Global Implications of Climate Change. Labs: SOCY1502, EESC1502
Prof(s): Gareau (Earth and Environmental Sciences) & Gareau (Sociology)
Description: Climate change is one of the defining issues of our time. Decisive and swift action to mitigate carbon emissions is needed in order to prevent catastrophic events and unhealthy environments for future generations. Societies worldwide will need to adapt to a new environmental reality. However, the causes, effects, and costs of climate change are not equally distributed, which raises questions about responsibility and justice. This course will encourage critical engagement with and personal reflection on these important issues, covering the science behind climate change, the use of different energy sources and their impact on carbon emissions, and the different roles of governments, businesses, religious communities, and individuals for enacting (and preventing) ambitious solutions to climate change.

Course: HIST1503/SOCY1503 Understanding the Social Contexts of Violence. Labs: HIST1504/SOCY1504
Prof(s): Johnson (History) & McGuffey (Sociology)
Description: This course explores pressing problems of modern race and gender-based violence across the globe, including domestic violence, youth gangs, police violence, sexual assault, and genocide. Using both historical and sociological perspectives, we will examine the roots of such violence, the ways in which it has been expressed, the meanings attached to it, and its implications for society--particularly for racial/ethnic minorities, women, and LGBT people. The lab for the course will involve students in collaborative work with local anti-violence projects and organizations in the Boston area.

Enduring Questions
Course: ENGL1701 Truth-telling in Literature
Prof(s): Adair (English)
Description: This course investigates how experience and imagination combine to produce compelling stories. We will question automatic distinctions between fact and fiction, examining written work instead on a spectrum of truth: from first-hand accounts and historical records to confessional poetry, historical fiction, and literary reportage, to parallel novels and even fantasy. Do literary techniques reveal truth, or do they obscure it? Can the imagination ever produce truth? We will consider the challenges of reliable and unreliable narration, cross-cultural translation, and embedded commentary in experimental poetry and metafiction. Authors include Tim O’Brien, Amitav Ghosh, Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, Plato, Emily Dickinson, Italo Calvino, and others.
linked with
Course: HIST1701 Truth-telling in History
Prof(s): Sellers-Garcia (History)
Description: “Truth-telling in History” examines both the difficulties of finding “truth” in historical documents and the challenges of writing truth about the past. Do any primary sources tell the truth? Does the work of interpretation always result in distortion? Does history, however it may be built on fact, become a form of fictionalizing? We will consider the dilemmas posed by oral history, the expectations for works of popular and scholarly histories, and the contrasting expectations for works of historical fiction. The final project will be a piece of historical fiction, a memoir, a popular history, or a similar creative project that wrestles with the issues raised through our readings.

Course: SOCY1702 The Body in Sickness and Health
Prof(s): Ashley (Nursing)
Description: This course explores the central role our bodies play in our perceptions of ourselves, our social roles, and our relationships with others. We will investigate the physiological, psychosocial, and cultural impact of body changes in normal growth and development (including pregnancy and aging) as well as in illness, trauma and disability. Topics may include obesity, pain, the lived experience of chronic illness, the effects of trauma, and end of life issues. The moral and emotional aspects of empathy and caregiving—both for ourselves and for others—will be explored. We will pay particular attention to the perspectives of patients and caregivers (including nurses, family members, social workers and doctors) as well as the supporting research from nursing and other health disciplines.

linked with
Course: ENGL1702 Reading the Body
Prof(s): Tanner (English)
Description: This course will use literature to explore how the experience of embodiment shapes human identity in contexts including illness, obesity, poverty, disability, pregnancy, trauma, and aging. Through the analysis of fiction, nonfiction, and poetry, we will consider the way that bodily experiences, material conditions and cultural constructions of normalcy shape our understanding of identity in sickness and in health. In our class discussions, we will consider how literary representations of bodies in sickness and health might influence real world actions and interactions by establishing distance or constructing empathy through the act of reading.

Course: ENGL1703 Humans, Nature, and Creativity
Prof(s): Song (English)
Description: While nature is routinely imagined as something apart from humans, there is also an age-old tradition of mixing them up. Nature has often taken on human qualities and humans have become naturalized. This course explores this collapsing with the help of literature from antiquity to the present. These include works by Virgil, Sophocles, Marvell, Shakespeare,
Thoreau, Rachel Carson, and Emily St. John Mandel. In what contexts might we want to maintain this distinction? Can critiquing this distinction help us to think about pressing environmental issues in insightful and original ways? What kind of balance can we strike between these categories?

linked with
Course: PHIL1703 Inquiring about Humans and Nature
Prof(s): Vandewall (Philosophy)
Description: This course examines the roots of the western philosophical distinction between humans and nature. Our human experience as rational individuals capable of abstract thought has set us apart from the rest of nature. But humans have found that we are not wholly outside of nature. We have an intimate and interdependent relationship with the rest of creation, a bond that we have stretched through art and technology and been drawn back into by desire and physical necessity. We must ask, then: What does it mean to be human? How do we define nature? What responsibilities do humans have to nature?

Spring 2016

Complex Problems
Course: HIST1501/ENGL1501 Genocide and Crimes Against Humanity. Labs: HIST1502/ENGL1502
Prof(s): Pendas & Shrayer (History and Slavic Languages)
Description: “Genocide” and “Crimes against Humanity” are legal terms first defined in 1945 in the context of bringing Nazi criminals to justice. The phenomena they describe were hardly new in the 1940s, nor have they disappeared since. This core course will explore the complex and burdensome history of mass murder of ethnic, religious, and socio-political populations across a number of cases, including the Armenian genocide, Stalin’s genocides, the Holocaust (Shoah), Cambodia, and Rwanda. What are the forces that gave rise to genocide and mass atrocities? How have individuals, both victims and perpetrators, experienced and witnessed traumatic events? How have individual states and nations, ethnic and religious groups, and the international community responded to these crimes?

Enduring Questions
Course: PHIL1701 Power, Justice, War: The Moderns
Prof(s): Brinton (Philosophy)
Description: This course will explore the enduring questions of power, justice and war by examining a series of modern political thinkers addressing questions of how to use power justly, how to balance concerns about justice in the midst of war, and how to govern the world through different modalities of power. Each text will be read to investigate the differences between normative and empirical thinking about war and justice. Discussions and papers will ask students
to think deeply about what happens when notions of the ideal and the real influence political thinking and generate conflict.

linked with

Course: POLI1701 Power, Justice, War: The Ancients
Prof(s): Bartlett (Political Science)
Description: This course will be devoted to a reading of The War of the Peloponnesians and Athenians, Thucydides' riveting account of the clash between the two super-powers of Greek antiquity (431-404 B.C.E.). Thucydides teaches us to think seriously about the serious questions that arise in and through war, above all that of the fate of justice in the face of necessity. In addition to class discussion and student presentations, students will also exercise their own practical judgment by deciding what they would do in a given circumstance, given the facts as Thucydides presents them.

linked with

Course: BIOL1701 Epidemics, Disease and Humanity
Prof(s): Dunn (Biology)
Description: This course investigates the relationship between humans and microbes in the context of historical epidemics. We will cover well-known epidemics, such as the Black Death during the Middle Ages and the devastating Influenza of 1918, and the role of antibiotics, vaccines, and antivirals in the treatment of key illnesses such as polio, tuberculosis, and AIDS. Students will learn basic concepts of biology including cell structure, genetics, physiology, and immunology. The course will conclude with identifying common behavioral themes as seen in the on-going AIDS epidemic and in the more recent emerging Ebola epidemic in West Africa.

linked with

Course: THTR1701 Devising Theatre: Illness as Metaphor
Prof(s): Cummings (Theatre)
Description: This course introduces the principles and practices of devised theatre, an alternative to conventionally scripted theatre that involves a group working together in a laboratory environment to create performance events. Class sessions will be organized as workshops in which students are up on their feet practicing ensemble theatre techniques, developing performance vocabularies, and working in small groups to make theatre pieces in response to the material covered in "Epidemics, Disease, and Humanity." A commitment to shared creativity and a readiness to perform are expected.

linked with

Course: THEO1701 Spiritual Exercises: Engagement, Empathy, Ethics
Prof(s): Robinette (Theology)
Description: This course introduces students to a variety of “spiritual exercises” that have helped shape the Christian theological traditions of the East and West. Focusing on figures and texts from antiquity to the current era, such a study presupposes that theology is not merely a theoretical enterprise but a way of life. Drawing upon insights from other disciplines (e.g., philosophy, psychology, the arts) as well other religious traditions, the course highlights the
perceptual, emotional, and cognitive transformation of the human person—or what Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the Jesuits, called “care for the whole human person” (cura personalis).

linked with
Course: MUSA1701 Aesthetic Exercises: Engagement, Empathy, Ethics
Prof(s): Callahan (Music)
Description: In this course you will hone your perceptual and critical faculties on a range of artworks and performances traversing media and frames, from ancient sculpture to contemporary sports. You will explore how differences between media and art forms affect representation, meaning, and reception. You will define and redefine “art.” You will read aesthetic theorists from Plato to YouTube users. Most importantly, you will lavish attention on your own embodied experience to understand what constitutes aesthetic engagement, with whom or what you empathize in aesthetic experience, and how, if at all, aesthetic exercises better your life and the lives of others.